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ABSTRACT

Intended to help elementary school teachers improve their current instructional practices, this booklet provides many effective spelling methods not included in published spelling programs. The first part of the book examines the recommended instructional spelling practices of selected authorities. The second part presents alternative spelling views, classified according to informal or individualized approaches. The third part offers guidelines and suggestions for useful spelling games and activities. An appendix of several spelling words lists and an annotated bibliography of works pertaining to spelling are included. (HTH)

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IMPROVING SPELLING IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Maryann Murphy Manning
Gary L. Manning

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INTRODUCTION

Few will argue with the thesis that correct spelling improves written communication and is a status symbol in some educational circles. Convincing reasons exist for including spelling instruction in the school curriculum. There are, however, numerous points of view regarding the best method for developing good spellers.

In this century much research has been done in the area of spelling, but all too often recommendations about spelling based on that research have not been implemented into actual classroom practice. A major reason for this is that publishers of spelling programs have ignored these recommendations when constructing their materials and most school systems rely primarily upon such published programs. While it is true that many students are learning to spell with the present curriculum, there are other effective methods that teachers can implement to improve the spelling abilities of students.

Goals of a spelling program include developing independent spellers who can spell many words and developing writers who will edit their written communications. The question is "How do we develop independent spellers who edit what they write?" Students should be given opportunities to do lots of writing and should be provided with many editing opportunities; alone, with peers and with teachers.

In most elementary schools, teachers use a set of spelling textbooks for a given grade level. These programs usually provide word lists, activities for students, and suggestions for teachers. Some school districts and many states dictate a set number of minutes per day or week for spelling instruction. Using the limited materials and the suggested time guidelines, teachers develop spelling programs for their students. What teachers decide to do in developing a spelling curriculum is a reflection of their knowledge of learning theory and their beliefs in how the language arts are best learned.

What can teachers do to improve instructional practices? The first step is to examine current practices and ask if they are consistent with what is known about the best ways to teach spelling. After comparing instructional practices with recommendations from authorities in spelling, teachers can make decisions about continuing the practices or changing them. In this publication alternative spelling views are presented to assist teachers in making these instructional decisions.

Conflicting views exist regarding these questions: (1) Should spelling be taught informally throughout the curriculum or should instruction be presented formally? (2) What should be the format of informal or formal spelling lessons? The first two sections focus upon these issues.

Included in this publication are the following: (1) a brief summary of recommendations based on views of selected authorities in spelling, (2) alternatives to traditional spelling programs, (3) spelling activities, (4) an annotated bibliography, and (5) word lists.

PART I
RECOMMENDED INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN SPELLING BASED ON VIEWS OF SELECTED AUTHORITIES

Ideas given by selected authorities in the area of spelling can be classified as they apply to either informal or formal procedures.

INFORMAL SPELLING PROCEDURES

In an informal approach, students learn to spell as a part of their writing and reading activities. As Zuttell[28] suggests, children are encouraged "to read and write extensively, and to test, evaluate, and revise, if necessary, their developing theories of how the spelling system works." Suggestions for effective informal spelling instruction include the following:

Accept the developmental quality of students' spelling. The studies of Read,[22] Beers and Henderson,[3] and Zuttell[29] suggest that learning to spell is a developmental process. Beers and Henderson[4] say that children proceed through different pattern sequences at different rates; however, the steps seem to be similar. They provide the following levels of development in spelling:

Level 1. Letter–name strategy. Children rely on articulatory features to determine the most appropriate letter for a particular sound. They substitute long vowels for short vowels.

Level 2. Vowel spellings refined. Children appear to refine their vowel spellings as they seek letters which represent sounds closest to the sounds in words they attempt to spell. They appear to add orthographic knowledge based on their observation that letters are chief symbols for sounds.

Level 5. Assimilation of various funds of information. Children assimilate various funds of information beyond purely phonetic ones as they spell. They increase their cognizance of the relationships between syntactic, phonemic, and morphophoemic constraints as they influence and direct English orthography.

If teachers accept the developmental aspects of students' writing, young children can be encouraged to write freely, "inventing" their spelling as they do so. When teachers closely examine such invented spelling, they will discover the logical and developmental aspects of each child's spelling. Later, perhaps in fourth grade, as Templeton[26] suggests, teachers may wish to help students realize the syntactic and semantic structural similarities of words.

Read to students often and encourage them to read. Zuttell[30] suggests that reading and being read to will help students increase their word knowledge. He noted that this increased word knowledge should help them improve their abilities to spell. Teachers need to make sure that they are giving students time to do recreational reading and that the reading materials are interesting, appropriate, and available. Additionally, teachers should read to students on a regular basis.

Realize the orthographic regularity of the English spelling system. Chomsky[5] states "the conventional spelling of words corresponds more closely to an underlying abstract level of representation within the sound system of the language, than it does to the surface phonetic form that the words assume in the written language." While two words may be phonetically different, their spelling and meaning may be similar such as *nation* and *nationally*. Chomsky goes on to say that English spelling does make sense, if viewed from an orthographic viewpoint rather than from a purely phonetic standpoint.

What does this mean to the teacher of spelling? Chomsky[6] suggests that teachers should help students to recognize and use the regularities that do exist. Students can be helped to make connections between the spelling of words such as *criticize* and *critical* in order to spell *criticize* with a *c* rather than an *s*.

Encourage children to do a great deal of writing. Chomsky[7] says that "if the child writes first, the written word grows out of his own con-

sciousness and belongs to him." In the beginning children will invent their own spellings for familiar words. Chomsky[8] reports that teachers must expect children's spellings "to reflect their own pronunciation and linguistic judgments, not the adult's." As children develop, if they are given opportunities to write frequently, their spellings of words will become more conventional. Teachers foster this development when they create environments giving students the time and encouragement to write on a regular basis.

FORMAL SPELLING PROCEDURES

In a formal approach to spelling, students study lists of words and take tests on those words to determine if spelling mastery has been achieved. Some teachers conduct their formal spelling instruction in a traditional fashion, having all students in the class study the same lists of words and take tests on a weekly basis. Other teachers, realizing the great range of spelling abilities in each classroom, may use a formal spelling program but individualize assignments and procedures. In the 1950's, Tyler[27] and Horn and Otto[19] described the vast range in students' spelling abilities at all grade levels. These findings hold true today, and the span of the difference increases with each progressive grade level. Important findings of individualized formal spelling programs include readiness, time, sources for words, rules, test–study–test method, and self-correcting test method.

Begin a formal spelling program only when a child is ready to spell, both intellectually and emotionally. Read, Allred, and Baird[23] suggest that before beginning a formal spelling program students should:

1. Have a mental age of about 7½ years.
2. Be able to enunciate words clearly.
3. See that words are composed of different letters.
4. Have a beginning phonetic sense and recognize the common letter–sound correspondence.
5. Have the ability to write and name all the letters of the alphabet correctly.
6. Be able to copy words correctly.
7. Be able to write their own names without copying.
8. Be reading at a minimum of second grade level.

9. Be able to write a few simple words from memory.
10. Ask for words they need in writing and be able to express a few thoughts in writing.
11. Demonstrate an interest in learning to spell.

If characteristics of individual children are not considered before starting a formal spelling program and the entire class is started in a spelling program, students may develop poor attitudes toward spelling which are difficult to change. If this list of criteria were carefully adhered to in the primary grades, some second graders and even some third graders would not receive formal instr ction in spelling. Teachers can work with colleagues, administrators, and parents to gain support for beginning formal spelling instruction at different times for different students.

Implement short, highly motivating lessons rather than longer sessions since long periods of instruction each week do not increase spelling competence. Some people have been encouraging longer periods of spelling instruction time; however, Jarvis[20] reports that short sessions are more beneficial than longer ones. He suggests it may not be necessary to spend 75 minutes per week. Sessions need to be short and highly motivating because long sessions tend to become boring and less effective. The key to the number of minutes students spend on spelling should be the interest they exhibit.

Use high-frequency words and the child's own writing as sources for spelling instruction. Lists of spelling words often come from research studies of high-frequency words used by children. The better known of these studies include: Allen,[1] Dolch,[10] Rinsland,[24] Horn[14] and Fitzgerald[11].

Thomas Horn[16] notes that spelling is probably improved most by stimulating and attending to children's writing. However, he points out that research shows direct instruction with the high-frequency words is needed. While there are many suggested substitutes for the formal word lists, as Horn reports, many children need direct instruction with high-frequency words.

Most formal spelling series published in recent years have utilized high-frequency words in their word lists. Spelling series vary in the way that lessons are constructed and in the number of words presented. Words from a spelling series can be a good source for a word list. In the section on individualizing programs, we will describe a plan for the use of spelling series word lists as a part of an individualized program.

In addition to spelling series, there are numerous other word lists available. Lists and references to lists are included in the *Appendix* and the *Annotated Bibliography*. Suggestions for the use of these word lists are also given in the section on individualizing.

Teach only a few rules and use the recommended practices for teaching those rules. Conflicting views exist about what rules to present and how to present rules. Published spelling programs vary: some include many rules, others have a minimum number.

Students should not be asked to memorize rules, and time should not be wasted on rules if the student already can spell the words. If it is deemed necessary to teach a rule, it should be done inductively rather than deductively. A meaningful time for teaching a rule is in a teacher–student conference setting when proofreading is occurring. A short discussion of the words like the one misspelled, allowing the students themselves to discover the generalization, is far better than teaching rules when the students do not see the need for a rule.

In 1934 Foran[13] gave the following suggestions regarding rules and many people feel they still apply:

1. Teach only a few rules and include only those that have no or few exceptions.
2. Teach a rule only when there is a need for it.
3. Teach rules inductively rather than deductively.

Davis[9] suggests these phonics rules are applicable 100 percent of the time in spelling:

1. When *c* and *h* are next to each other, they make only one sound. (*torch*)
2. When the letter *c* is followed by *o* or *a*, the sound of *k* is likely to be heard. (*vacant*)
3. When *ght* is seen in a word, *gh* is silent. (*light*)
4. When a word begins *kn*, the *k* is silent. (*knee*)
5. When a word begins with *wr*, the *w* is silent. (*wreck*)
6. When a word ends in *ck*, it has the sound as in *look*. (*truck*)
7. When *ure* is the final syllable in a word, it is unaccented. (*venture*)

8. When *tion* is the final syllable in a word, it is unaccented. (*election*)

9. When the first vowel element in a word is followed by *th*, *ch*, or *sh*, these symbols are not broken when the word is divided into syllables and may go with either the first or second syllable. (*feathers*)

Additionally, Davis reports that these generalizations are applicable in spelling 77 to 99 percent of the time:

1. If the only vowel letter is at the end of a word, the letter usually stands for a long sound. (*spy*)

2. The *r* gives the preceding vowel a sound that is neither long nor short. (*orbit*)

3. Words having double *e* usually have the long *e* sound. (*teeth*)

4. In *ay* the *y* is silent and gives *a* its long sound. (*display*)

5. When *y* is the final letter in a syllable it usually has the sound of long *i*. (*cycle*)

6. When *a* is followed by *r* and final *e*, we expect to hear the sound heard in *care*. (*share*)

7. *Ch* is usually pronounced as it is in *kitchen*, *catch*, and *chair*, not like *sh*. (*merchant*)

8. When *c* is followed by *e* or *i*, the sound of *s* is likely to be hard. (*crease*)

9. The letter *g* often has a sound similar to that of *j* in *jump* when it precedes the letter *i* or *e*. (*age*)

10. In most two-syllable words, the first syllable is accented. (*quarter*)

11. If *a*, *in*, *re*, *ex*, *de*, or *be* is the first syllable in a word, it is usually unaccented. (*decide*)

12. In most two-syllable words that end in a consonant followed by *y*, the first syllable is accented and the last is unaccented. (*candy*)

13. If the first vowel sound in a word is followed by a single consonant, that consonant usually begins the second syllable. (*eager*)

14. When there is one *e* in a word that ends in a consonant, the *e* usually has a short sound. (*zest*)

15. When the last syllable is the sound *r*, it is unaccented. (*under*)

Use the test–study–test method which is proven to be most effective with intermediate grade children and the preview–test–study–test method in the primary grades. Fitzgerald[12], Thomas Horn[17], and Sherwin[25] report that intermediate students should use a test–study–test method and that primary students should use a preview–test–study–test method. Translated into practice this means that intermediate students should be tested on a list of words and then practice or study only those words that they misspell. After study, they again are tested. Both tests should be immediately corrected by the students themselves.

In the primary grades, the method is the same except for the preview step. Before students are tested, they look at or preview the words. Other parts of the book provide suggestions for alternative study methods and testing procedures.

Ask students to correct their own tests. E. Horn[15] and T. Horn[18] reported several decades ago that having students correct their own tests is an effective way to improve spelling. Some teachers express concern that some students will not check their words honestly or accurately. This problem may be minimized if teachers give special assistance to less independent students and help them learn to correct their tests accurately. Some students might be tested by the teacher at sample intervals.

PART II
ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL SPELLING PROGRAMS

A variety of spelling methods exists, allowing for alternatives as spelling instruction is planned for students. Informal and formal approaches are discussed in this section.

INFORMAL APPROACH TO SPELLING

An alternative to a formal spelling program is the informal approach to spelling instruction in which spelling permeates the entire curriculum. The resources used are inexpensive and relatively simple to assemble, and the activities are informal. The role of the teacher in the informal approach changes from the traditional caller of word lists to that of cooperative editor.

What Is Necessary?

Most of the resources needed are already in most classrooms: word lists, individual student word lists, dictionaries, spelling games, and writing materials. We have included several lists in the Appendix for reference; however, other word lists are readily available. These lists can be presented in a spelling center in numerous ways, such as on the wall, on cards, attached to a ring, in a notebook. They provide easy reference for students in their spelling and writing. This method departs from the traditional use of the list where all students were assigned specific lists with prescribed expectations for mastery. Individual student lists may be constructed by the student, by teachers in cooperation with the student, or by pairs of students. The lists may include words the student knows how to spell, words the student has difficulty in spelling, or both. In the initial stages of spelling study, we recommend using words the student already can spell; however, as the students progress in their spelling, they should be given a choice as to which types of words will be most beneficial to them. Successful ways of using the students' own words as the source for their spelling instruction include:

My Dictionary—Booklets are made for each child by stapling together at least 26 pages with a simple construction paper cover. Children keep their own dictionaries with their other books and materials and add words that they misspell to the booklet.

The child adds misspelled words during proofreading sessions. At the teacher's suggestion, a reasonable number of high-frequency words for study may be added also.

My Word Box—Small boxes are obtained for each child. Each identified word is printed by the teacher or the child on a small card such as a 3×5 index card, and it is used in a sentence. For words that name things, the child can draw or paint to illustrate the word or use a picture found in a magazine. The words in the box can be used for direct spelling instruction.

Word Wall—An idea suggested by R. Van Allen[2] is the word wall. Students put words on the wall (word cards fastened to the wall, or written on paper or poster board). The words might be categorized as time words, color words, naming words, etc.

Ring of Words—A variation of the word dictionary or word box is the ring of words. Use a large metal ring to collect word cards which have holes punched in the corner. The cards can be made in the shape of keys. The child writes on the cards words he/she finds interesting or has recently misspelled. The ring of words then becomes a source for spelling words.

Dictionaries

Dictionaries appropriate for the developmental levels of the students are included in the spelling center. Because of the range of students' spelling abilities, picture dictionaries and student dictionaries are needed in most classrooms to provide for the editing needs of all students. Glossaries and thesauruses should be included in intermediate and middle school level spelling centers.

Spelling Activities

The spelling center can contain a collection of activities—commercial, teacher-made, and student-made. Examples are puzzles, "Scrabble for Juniors," alphabet blocks, and spelling games. Ideas for these activities are provided in the Spelling Activities section of this publication.

Activities are used for studying the words. In an informal approach, the activities could be used on a student self-selection basis. In a more formal approach, teachers contract with students, having them

do a certain number of spelling activities during a given length of time. An example of a contract is to list five spelling activities and to contract with the student to complete two of the activities during a one-week period.

Writing Materials

The spelling center contains all of the items necessary for writing such as paper and pencils, materials necessary to make dictionaries, word rings, book covers, and the like. The materials should be easily accessible for student use.

Reading and Writing Promote Spelling

Much reading and writing occur in classrooms when an informal spelling approach is used. Moffett and Wagner[21] suggest that students develop visual images of both regular and irregular words through reading, and this strengthens their spelling. They also believe that much writing practice is necessary for developing good spellers. As students are encouraged to write and students who are really extending their composing abilities make guesses at spelling as they express their creative thoughts, penalties for misspelling must be removed.

Editing

Editing can take several forms. There is self–correcting, peer–editing and teacher–student editing. The goal of each is to develop independent spellers who edit their own writing. To reach this goal, set aside a place in the classroom for students to edit together and for teachers and students to edit cooperatively. In the primary grades, there will be a greater dependence upon the teacher for editing. In intermediate and middle schools, students can consult each other more often than the teacher.

A Problem

The one problem that often arises in classrooms where teachers utilize an informal approach is grading. Grading presents a challenge because there are no weekly lists with number grades and regular daily activities for all students in a classroom. There are no easy solutions to this problem, and this difficulty does prevent many teachers from using the approach. It may be possible for teachers to function with an informal approach in spelling throughout the entire curriculum and still comply with the school policy by having a short traditional spelling period and

spelling tests. Teachers dedicated to using an informal approach in the teaching of spelling must come to grips with this serious issue and find a method that works for them in their schools.

Spelling in the Content Areas

Spelling words can be taught to intermediate and middle school students through content areas. Much of the spelling instruction in the content areas is done in an indirect manner. When vocabulary words are being presented for new concepts, the words are usually presented in some visual manner, such as on the chalkboard. Students are usually involved in writing the new words as they complete learning activities on the new concepts. Students can be assisted in spelling the new words either by verbally helping them, by providing lists of words, or by assisting students in the use of reference materials that contain the correct spelling.

Content area teachers can also help students with their spelling by requiring much reading and writing. Besides the writing, students' work can be improved through self-editing, peer-editing, and teacher-student editing. Another procedure teachers use is making dictionaries and glossaries readily available for students to use in the editing process. As content area teachers assist students in developing reading skills, they should assist in developing spelling skills, too.

INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH TO FORMAL SPELLING

Teachers can develop their own formal individualized spelling programs which can reflect recommendations of spelling authorities and enable them to operate within the constraints of their own teaching situations. Ideas offered here regarding the use of word lists and student contracts provide both structure and opportunities for individualization.

Using Word Lists

In developing a spelling program with word lists, teachers may use the following steps: (1) develop the necessary word lists, (2) assemble spelling practice activities, (3) implement the teacher-made spelling program, (4) evaluate program for constant improvement.

There is no one right way to individualize spelling programs. Since teachers and students differ in the way they work and each learning setting is different, teachers can try one way and continue to modify it to meet the particular class or situation.

Step 1. Develop the Necessary Word List

Word lists can be developed from two major sources. The first source, probably the most beneficial and also the most complex to manage, is misspelled words from individual student's work. The second source is lists that have already been developed in a spelling series. A good procedure is to combine the two, using a list of words in combination with words misspelled by the student.

The student's own words. Use a variety of ways to collect a student's own problem words. Words that students use and need to spell will emerge as they engage in functional or creative writing. Students can keep a list of these words as they discover the need to master them. Some children will find this easy to do while others may need constant reminding.

Word lists. Word lists that are already developed come from several sources. One source is publications like this one. Many language arts books contain word lists which may be organized in different ways: (1) words with similarities (word families); (2) graded lists (easy to more difficult); (3) spelling demons (words that are difficult to spell). Another method to use in developing a word list is choosing words from any spelling series.

Making the lists ready for student use. There are many ways to organize lists for student use. Short lists on index cards set up in kits can be very useful. Some teachers find that typing the words with a primary typewriter is the most legible method, but others simply print the words with markers or pens. When the list is a graded one like those found in spelling series, the cards can be filed in a box from easiest to most difficult.

Step 2. Assemble Spelling Practice Activities

The teacher then assembles practice activities to help students learn to spell words. Activities can be taken from language arts books, other idea books, and articles from professional journals. Numerous activities are listed in Part III of this book.

After activity ideas are collected, they can be put on cards with directions explaining their use to the student. If the information is written at the student's reading level and the directions are clear, the student can do the activity without the help of the teacher. Laminating the activity cards increases their longevity.

Step 3. Implement the Teacher–made Spelling Program

After selecting or developing a spelling list or assembling activities and list, the program is ready for implementation. The role of teachers in this program is new to some. No longer will they stand in front of the room pronouncing spelling words. Time is spent on conferencing with students on work that has been completed, proofreading work, and encouraging. Some time may be spent pronouncing or dictating words, but not with large groups. Most work is done with pairs or individuals and only on a periodic basis. Moving from student to student or pair to pair, the teachers guide students to become more independent and proficient spellers.

Guides for Implementation

Guide 1. Assign appropriate spelling lists to students.
Guide 2. Pair students for instruction.
Guide 3. Develop a place and a system for students to record their progress on tests and activities.
Guide 4. Set up testing procedures.
Guide 5. Spot–test and confer with individual students.

Guide 1. Identify student's needs and assign to appropriate list. Students should work in the kit at levels where they can succeed. If the list is a graded one, a pre-test can be developed to place students appropriately by selecting a few words from various lists and developing level tests. Once students are placed, teacher observation can give clues about the appropriateness of placement. If many words are missed consistently, the placement is probably too high, and the student should be placed at a lower level. On the other hand, if the student is missing no words, placement is probably too low, and the student should be placed at a higher level or should quickly proceed through the lists until more appropriate lists are reached.

Guide 2. Pair students for instruction. There are several different methods of organizing pair learning. The teacher can examine and try different ones to see what will work best for each student. Some methods of pairing include: (1) self-selection, (2) sociogram selection, (3) mixed achievement level pairing, (4) equal achievement level pairing.

Self-selection methods allow students to choose the person with whom they want to work in spelling. They remain paired as long as they wish or as long as the teacher determines that it is a successful pairing.

Sociogram selection is a more formal type of pairing where students are asked to write their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices of other students with whom they would like to work. The teacher then pairs students honoring as many 1st choices as possible and trying to pair each student with at least his/her 2nd or 3rd choices. Just as with informal self-selection, there may be students who are not selected, and it then becomes necessary to make assignments.

Mixed achievement pairing involves pairing students together who have different achievement levels in spelling. Some teachers like this because they feel the better speller can help the poorer speller.

Equal achievement level pairing pairs students who are at the same level in spelling. Some teachers like this because they feel these students can challenge one another and progress at optimum speed.

How do we begin with pair–learning and avoid problems? Try beginning with just a few students, perhaps the higher-achieving or more independent learners. The number of students paired can increase as the system gets under way. Some teachers institute the entire spelling program through pairing while others utilize pair–learning along with some group activities. Since pair–learning, or any form of organization where students are interacting with one another, is noisier than traditional spelling instruction in which only the teacher speaks as she or he pronounces words to students, it is necessary to maintain an orderly learning environment. Students learn to work together because pair–learning is an effective way to help individualize spelling. Students can help one another at their levels, and self-concepts of students may be improved through helping others. Through this interaction, motivation for spelling can be enhanced. Simply stated, pair–learning works!

Guide 3. Develop a place and a system for students to record their progress on tests and activities. Use a central location (a desk, counter top, table) for individual student folders containing assigned spelling activities, records of students' progress, and samples of students' work. In this same area, place the formal word lists in kit form.

Records in spelling are of two types: teachers' records and students' records. We do not advise teachers to display publicly the results of students' work with systems such as starred charts for perfect spellers or bar graphs informing observers who are the good spellers and poor spellers. Rather, teachers can have students record their own progress, and thereby chart their own spelling growth.

No one form is better than another. Several forms are included so that teachers may decide which will work best in their own situations.

FORM 1

MY SPELLING WORK

Card Completed _____ Day _____ My Score _____

FORM 2

Student Name _____

List No.	Practice Activity No.	Number Correct	Date	Test Score	Partner Initial

FORM 3

SPELLING RECORD

Name _____

List No. _____ Number Correct on pre-test _____

_____

Number Correct on post-test _____

Signature of Partner _____

FORM 4

Individual Spelling Profile

Coded to match the 36 units found in most grade level spelling texts with the letters representing spelling tests across grade levels. Student checks or writes in the date in each cell when each level is mastered.

Name

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1							
2							
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Guide 4. Set up testing procedure. Students administer pre–tests of appropriate word lists to their partners. If mastery is demonstrated, the student proceeds to the next list. If mastery is not shown, the student practices until the test is given again. The pair determines when the student is ready to take the test again. What is mastery? Mastery of a word list means to spell *all* the words correctly. However, if a student consistently misspells a particular word or two on a list, she or he should be allowed to move on to the next list and continue to review those misspelled words until mastery is achieved.

Guide 5. Spot–test and confer. Sometimes it is necessary to spot test some or all of the students. Spot–testing is testing a student over a list of words selected from the lists the student has completed. This could be done as the need arises, such as when a student seems to be progressing through lists faster than the teacher thinks is reasonable. Spot–testing can also be done on a systematic basis; students might be regularly spot–tested after they have completed ten lists of words.

When students report they have mastered words and a teacher finds they have not, the teacher may quietly but firmly tell the students that these lists will not be recorded as mastered and that they must continue to work on them until they are mastered. Spot–testing uncovers students' inaccurate reporting of mastery and enables the teacher to learn

who needs regular spot-testing and who can proceed without close attention.

Conferencing can also be done on a scheduled or informal basis. No matter how good the spelling kit, the practice activities, the teacher's management, or the pair-learning are, students need personal contact with teachers. Conferences achieve this. Students who are progressing well need to know that we teachers are aware of their progress and we encourage it. Students who are not progressing can be given encouragement and reinforcement in the conference.

No rule governs the frequency or length of the conferences. The time and frequency of conferences will be determined by variables such as the number of students and their individual needs. Some conferences may last three minutes, while others may last ten. Conferences can take place during the language arts period or at any time the teacher finds appropriate.

Step 4. Evaluate Program for Constant Improvement

Evaluation should be continuous. Individual teachers have different styles, and quality instruction can occur in different ways. Teachers may ask themselves these questions while working with a formal spelling program:

1. Are students working on words that are at their levels?
2. Are students succeeding in the spelling program?
3. Are students developing positive attitudes toward spelling?
4. Are students transferring their abilities to spell the list words to their writing?
5. Am I devoting an adequate amount of time to spelling, ensuring success, and avoiding boredom?
6. Am I careful with the rules I present and the way that I present them?
7. Am I presenting words in oral and written contexts?
8. Am I continually building the spelling resources available to students in my classroom?
9. Am I continually extending my management ability so that I can better meet the needs of more students?
10. Am I a model of one with a good attitude toward spelling?

Students' attitudes toward spelling are very important, and the success they feel in spelling influences these attitudes. While students will not always relate how they feel, an attitude inventory might give some clues. Try using the following inventory or modify it and develop your own:

Inventory of Spelling Attitudes

The best thing about spelling is _____

I know my teacher likes spelling because _____

The hardest part of spelling is _____

The thing I do not like about spelling is _____

I would be a better speller if _____

It is fun in spelling when _____

The best speller I know is _____

We have spelling in school because _____

When you grow up you use spelling to _____

People who cannot spell are _____

The thing that helps me most in spelling is _____

Student Contracts

Contracts may be used to involve students in making decisions about what they are to do, how they will do it, and how they will evaluate the outcomes. Student contracts have different uses and they can be employed along with teacher-developed word lists, commercial spelling materials, or the total curriculum approach.

Some teachers may want to use a contract with only a few students rather than an entire class. Several contract forms are provided which teachers can use if they wish to do student contracting in spelling.

FORM 1

SAMPLE CONTRACT

I _____

will do the following spelling activity before _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ _____

Teacher Student

FORM 2

SAMPLE CONTRACT

Student Name _____

Starting Date _____ Ending Date _____

I will complete the following spelling before _____

Activity	Date Completed	Evaluation

_____

Student Signature

_____

Teacher Signature

FORM 3

Sample Contract

Name _____

List or unit number _____

Complete activities number 1 and 2.
Choose two additional activities from this list to complete:

1. Pronounce all words to a friend.
2. Use all words in a sentence. Have a friend listen.
3. Write a short story using at least seven words from the list.
4. Write a short play using five of the words.
5. Write sentences with ten of the words.
6. Look up the origin of three of the words.
7. Construct a crossword puzzle using five of the words.

My Work Record

Activity	Date	Self-evaluation

_____ Teacher

_____ Student

Improved Use of Commercial Materials

The use of commercial materials can be improved by having students self-pace themselves in the commercial spelling books or by using a commercially prepared spelling kit.

Self-pacing in the Commercial Spelling Books

A spelling kit can be made by cutting up spelling textbooks. Cut up two spelling textbooks at each level using several levels of a spelling series. Two copies of each book are necessary because one side of each page is covered when the page is mounted. The pages, once mounted, can be placed in a box or plastic tube in a file order system from the easiest level to the most difficult. If students are asked to do the textbook activities suggested on the cards in addition to studying the words, make teacher's editions with correct responses available so that students can check their own work. Rather than removing the pages of the spelling books, some teachers copy the words from each unit on separate index cards. All levels of the series should be utilized; but, if this is not possible, use books at least one grade level below and one grade level above, in addition to the book at the grade level of the students.

When commercial spelling books are used to develop a spelling kit, the kit can be implemented in accordance with the suggestions given in the section on using word lists.

Commercial Spelling Kits

Commercial spelling kits have appeared on the market in recent years. Their quality varies, and some are designed as a total spelling program while others are supplemental to one specific series.

When considering the purchase of a commercial kit, teachers should ask the following questions:

1. Does the kit include both spelling lists and practice activities?
2. Is the kit multi-leveled and are the levels appropriate for my students?
3. Does the kit reflect spelling research?
4. Is the management system one that I can implement in my classroom?
5. Does the kit include a recordkeeping system?
6. Is the kit consumable?

Some kits provide spelling practice activities as well as lists of words. Good practice activities can provide students with attractive ways to learn words. An advantage of most commercial kits is that they do provide—in one box—a wide range of spelling words. The management system of a kit needs to be examined to determine if it can be implemented with ease. If teacher-aides or volunteers are required for successful implementation, the teacher should consider this before purchase. The time required to implement the program and the in-service training required must be considered also. Commercial kits should contain appropriate recordkeeping systems, since students will keep some of their own records.

A FINAL NOTE

Most teachers have their pet peeves about instructional practices in spelling, and we have ours. We believe the use of spelling bees and the use of spelling wall charts with rows of gold stars should be eliminated. Nothing damages students' ultimate success in spelling as much as sitting, for what seems like hours, after they have been eliminated, while others demonstrate their abilities in a spelling bee; or having a large chart visible to the world which tells everyone that certain students are poor spellers because they failed to get gold stars or *100%* by their names.

We hope that through reading the ideas presented in this section that teachers will examine their spelling programs and some will possibly modify them. We hope other teachers will continue their practices because they find support for and success in what they are currently doing.

PART III
SPELLING ACTIVITIES

The use of the numerous commercial and teacher-made spelling activities available should be governed by the needs of the students and the value the teacher places upon such activities. A few simple guidelines to use in choosing and developing spelling games and activities are:

1. Keep games simple. Often spelling games become so complex that students lose sight of why they are playing the game.
2. All students in a small group should be actively involved in the game.
3. Students should work on spelling activities or games in pairs or small groups so they can capitalize on each other's spelling knowledge.
4. Students should write spelling words rather than spell the words orally. Writing helps students develop the correct visual image.
5. Competitive games should only be played with students of similar abilities. Only in children's stories should rabbits and turtles compete.
6. Checking for the correctness of the spelling should be a natural part of any spelling activity.
7. Spelling activities should always be success-oriented.

Spelling can be fun and need not be painful for students. Games, if self-selected and self-correcting, are usually a source of enjoyment.

While enjoyable and useful for many students, the following activities are intended to serve only as guidelines for teachers and can be modified in any way to meet the needs of the individual classroom and teacher. A spelling resource file of activities helps to keep the activities available to serve needs for a long period of time. This file of activities can be placed in a spelling center for maximum utilization.

Puzzles

Crossword puzzles and other word puzzles are available from many sources. They appear in paperback books which can be taken apart and laminated. Puzzles can be found in students' weekly newspapers and commercial kits; these can be mounted on cardboard and laminated. These puzzles contribute to building vocabularies, also.

Charades

Pairs of students and small groups can play spelling charades. This involves telling the number of letters in the word to be spelled and then acting out or pantomiming the word for the other team. In addition to spelling practice, students dramatize nonverbally.

Affix Team Competition

Small groups of students or pairs take a suffix, prefix, and/or root word. Within a prescribed number of minutes they compile a list of all the words they can think of or that they can find in the dictionary that include the affix or root word. As with most spelling activities, there is vocabulary-building potential in this game also.

Homophone Fun

This game is played by an individual, pair, or small group. Students search for words that sound alike but are spelled differently. Using the dictionary and asking others for suggestions are legal and encouraged. The emphasis is on producing the list and not on originality.

Scrabble for Juniors

This game has been published in very simple to very sophisticated forms. Poor spellers often do not like Scrabble, especially when points are given only for correctly spelled words. Teachers can allow students to make up their own rules for Scrabble, the purpose of the game being the practice. Many students, including the weaker spellers, enjoy the game if they feel free to use the dictionary.

Making Words from Words

Certainly an old activity but still a useful one is taking long words and constructing numerous words from all of the combinations. The long word can be one the students suggest, sometimes the name of an approaching holiday or new content area words. Have students work in pairs checking the spelling of words together.

Media Spelling

Especially fun for primary age students is spelling words with paint, making them in clay, or writing in sand. This should not be done with large numbers of words but rather with a few words difficult for an individual child.

Alphabet Macaroni

Have students spell words using letters made from such materials as felt, wood, sandpaper, etc. This kinesthetic approach is fun for all students, not just the severely disabled.

Spelling Demon Games

Many commercial games are available to teach spelling demons such as "their" and "there." These games include board games and card decks. Use these games only if they fit the suggested guidelines and include high-frequency words.

Technological Devices

Many devices give students instant feedback on the spelling of words. The best of these devices give visual practice in recognizing the correct spelling of the word.

Spelling in Context

Make enjoyable spelling activities by taking humorous short stories and poems and deleting occasional words, leaving enough words for students to comprehend the meaning. Short fables and familiar nursery rhymes are good. An example is, "Mary had a l_____ lamb."

Constructing Silly Stories

Rather than asking students to repeatedly write sentences with a spelling list, ask them to write a silly story using all words on the list. Often the humor will be clear only to the writer.

Dramatizing Spelling Words

Students enjoy spontaneous opportunities to dramatize words and their meanings. When the words to be dramatized are printed on cards, students develop visual memory of the words.

Anagrams

An anagram is a word which is made by changing the letters of another word. Some examples are: smile—miles, meat—team, pin—nip, saw—was, and run—urn. Games based on such visual wordplay can be motivating.

Editing Activities

Numerous editing activities are beneficial as spelling activities. One activity is asking students to compile a list of all the words they misspell over a short period of time. Students are then asked to group the words to determine if they can gain insight about their spelling of words.

In another editing activity, students who have personal copies of dictionaries are asked to place a small dot by all words that they look up in the dictionary. The student then compiles a list of words looked up more than twice. The list can be kept in the dictionary for easy access whenever they note that they have looked up the word more than twice. Many students enjoy their own personal spelling demon list.

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The following material was removed due to copyright restrictions:

APPENDIX

"Words Often Spelled and Pronounced Incorrectly"
From Roach Van Allen. Language Experiences in Communication.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976, p. 247.

"List of Words for Spelling and Editing"
From Roach Van Allen. Language Experiences in Communication.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976, pp. 248-49.

"List of 100 High-Frequency Words in Rank Order" and
*"List of 300 High-Frequency Words"
From Roach Van Allen. Language Experiences in Communication.
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"List A: 350 Most Useful Spelling Words"
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"List B: 450 Very Useful Spelling Words"
From James A. Fitzgerald. The Teaching of Spelling.
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